

CHRISTMAS.

When the Day Was First Celebrated.
How It Was Made a Fixed Festival—Date of Christ's Birth Unknown.

Many of Our Sports and Games Traceable to Heathen Origin—Gift Giving Comes from the Romans.

The British Druids Contribute Decoration. Our Santa Claus and Christmas Tree Come from Germany.

It is now 1789 years since the birth of the Saviour of mankind was celebrated for the first time after that glorious morning, 1887 years ago, when in a rude stable in Bethlehem of Judea, a babe was born whose kings and wise men fell down before and worshipped. Christmas was first kept as a holiday A. D. 98. Its name was derived from Christ and the Saxon *masse*, or mass, and the two words were combined to denote a special service in honor of the birth of the Son of God.

For the first three centuries Christmas was one of the most movable of all religious festivals. The exact date of the Saviour's nativity was very uncertain, and the Eastern church observed the 6th of January as the anniversary of both his birth and circumcision. But in the fourth century, Pope Julius I. ordered an investigation of the matter, and after long deliberation the theologians of both the east and west united in appointing December 25 to be kept as Christ's birthday.

We have no means, however, of determining the exact date of the Saviour's nativity. The statement that the date was preserved in the public archives at Rome, though asserted by some of the early fathers, is not now generally credited. As to the year, the preponderance of opinion and of such evidence as we have seem to favor that of 4 B. C. As for the day, the 25th of December is the height of the rainy season in Judea, and therefore the fact, as stated by the New Testament, that shepherds were watching their flocks on the plains while stars were shining in the heavens on the night of the Saviour's birth, make it extremely unlikely that it could have occurred in that month. Many learned treatises have been written and plausible arguments advanced to prove that it must have taken place in October, but the question will ever remain in abeyance.

It seems not improbable that in selecting December 25 as the date of the great event save one—the crucifixion—in the world's history, the worthy fathers were influenced by a desire to supplant the many heathen festivals of the winter solstice, such as the Saturnalia or great Festival of Saturn and Ops, which began on the 19th of December (or, after Caesar's reformation of the calendar, on the 17th) and continued for seven days. This presumption is made more probable from the fact that for many centuries the festivities of Christmas were prolonged till "Twelfth Night," January 6, and even till "Candlemas Day," February 2, while they usually began as early as the night before "All Saints' Day" or "Hallow Eve," thus showing the desire to make the heathen converts to Christianity feel that they had lost nothing in harmless pleasure and enjoyment by the substitution of the Christian festival of the winter solstice for the heathen one. Not only did the Romans observe this period of the year as a time of mirth and rejoicing. The ancient Celtic and Germanic races did the same. The Germans, especially, were then accustomed to hold great feasts, of which the most prominent continued during the twelve days from December 25 to January 6. They believed that throughout that time their great Deities moved about the earth, and that, though invisible, their personal movements could be readily traced.

By the celebration of Christmas, with its grand liturgy, its magnificent music and its pictorial and dramatic representations of the principal events in the life of Him whose birth it commemorated, the church sought to replace these heathen festivities and to lift up the minds of the people to something higher and holier, but many of the old heathen festive images were to a certain extent retained, and not a few of them have survived even down to our own time. Indeed, so much is this the case that many of our most distinctively Christmas customs, sports and games can be distinctly traced to a heathen origin.

The day was regarded from the first by the Christians as a most sacred event and as a mythical, joyous festival, but in the middle ages the festive observances of the day often so far over-topped its more sacred features that the clergy were frequently compelled to check the unseemly merriment of their flocks. All persons, old and young, were then accustomed to indulge in what were called the "December liberties," which were gambols, pranks and masquerades of the most extravagant and burlesque character, in which everything and everybody were absurdly satirized and burlesqued.

At the Christmas dinners of the old feudal barons the first dish brought to the table was a huge boar's head, having a man placed in its mouth. It was carried in great state the whole length of the immense banquet hall upon a massive silver platter borne by the major domo of the household, attended by a large number of servants and vassals, and placed before the lord of the manor at the head of the festive board with great pomp and ceremony. It was followed by great trenchers of beef, venison, pork, mutton, turkeys, capons, hens, geese, ducks, plum puddings, nuts, sugar and honey, and monstrous bowls of punch and wassail. Then came Christmas sports and games of many kinds, the festivities being presided over by a specially appointed officer of the household called the Lord of Misrule, the Abbot of Unreason, who reigned supreme from "Hallow Eve," October 31, to "Candlemas Day," February 2.

Prominent among these Christmas diversions were "Snap Dragon," a game which consisted in trying to snatch raisins from burning brands and place them in one's mouth without dropping them; "Hot Cakes," in which a blindfolded person was struck by the other members of the company and required to guess the name of each person dealing him a blow; and "Mumming," which consisted of an exchange of garments between men and women, who thus attired in the habiliments of their opposite sex, went from house to house making merry and partaking of Christmas cheer with the inmates. In a very quaint old book of folk-lore, called "Poures About Our Coal Fire, or Christmas Entertainments," I find the following: "Then comes mumming or masquerading, when ye 'Squire's' wardrobe is ransacked for dresses of all kinds, and everyone in ye family, except ye 'Squire' himself, must be transformed."

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than by the following passage from Sir Walter Scott's "Mention":
On Christmas eve the bells were rung;
On Chrismas eve the mass was sung;
The staid priest the choir sang;
Then came the carol of the Squire's hall;
To yeassal, tenant, serf and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside;
And every door was open wide;
The heir with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose.
All hailed with uncontrolled delight
And general voice, the happy night
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation;
And England was merry England when
Old Christmas brought its sports again.
Twas Christmas time the merry tale,
Twas Christmas time the merriest tale,
A Christmas gambol or would cheer
A poor man's heart through half the year."

The custom of giving presents on Christmas, now so universally observed, is derived from the old Roman Saturnalia or feast of Saturn above mentioned, at which it was customary for all the members of a household to offer gifts to each other, and is not traceable, as has been sometimes stated, to the New Testament. The custom of the wise men made rich offerings to the infant Jesus. For the Christmas trees we are indebted to the ancient Germans, who, during the continuance of their great feast of the winter solstice, already described, hung large yew trees with rude gifts, decorations and lights. From them, too, come Santa Claus, Kris-Kringle, Knecht Ruprecht, and the many other fabulous personages charged with the duty of bringing gifts to good children, as does also the beautiful fable that such offerings are brought directly by the sweet hands of the loving "Christ child"—the infant Jesus himself.

In the primitive church, Christmas day was preceded by an Eve or vigil, and the Eastern church observed the 6th of January as the anniversary of both his birth and circumcision. But in the fourth century, Pope Julius I. ordered an investigation of the matter, and after long deliberation the theologians of both the east and west united in appointing December 25 to be kept as Christ's birthday.

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of the far north change to wolves on Christmas eve, and so rage against all human nature as to harm mankind more than do the attacks of real wolves. It is a matter for regret that large numbers of these human wolves are to be found in our own country as well as in Sweden, and that the excesses of their wolfish nature is not confined to Christmas eve.

G. W. C.

IDaho's RABBIT PLAGUE.

General Brisson Says it is Almost as Bad There as it is in Australia.
Fort McKinney, Wyo. T. Letter to New York World.

The rabbits are again becoming a plague in many portions of Idaho, Nevada and Wyoming. These little bunnies bid fair to do as much damage in our country as they have in Australia, unless timely steps are taken for their extermination. In Australia, in many places, they have eaten up the whole of the country, even the sheep pastures being destroyed by them. It seems strange that national legislation should be required against so small an animal as a rabbit, but the English colonists of Australia are glad enough to have the government aid them in destroying the little pests. Everything green and every blade of grass is eaten by them to the earth, and the many other insects, anything more destructive to vegetation than rabbits. They appear in vast armies, and moving across a country strip it of all vegetable matter. Gardens are their special delight, and not a vegetable is left where they can once take hold.

When out in Idaho, a year or two ago, I had some very bad rabbits. The present time, in the association that cluster around it, in the sports and pastimes, its ancient memories and even in its devotions have been in all ages second only to Christmas itself. One beautiful observance of Christmas eve, having a heathen origin, is the decorating of churches and dwellings with evergreen, holly, laurel and mistletoe, the being perpetuation of a custom of the old British Druids, whose belief it was that kindly sylvan spirits sought these ornaments of living green and hovered near them, untouched and unharmed by nipping frost, until the death of winter. In the old church calendar appointed after the manner of the Druids, the 25th of December, the eve of that day was marked "templum exornatum," (let the temples be adorned).

To the mistletoe, a favorite bough for Christmas decoration, there has attached, from time immemorial, a traditional "kissing bough" that is popularly considered as holy, as any sacred to Englishmen by Magdalen. A man and a woman, during the Christmas season, can catch a female under a sprig of mistletoe, is entitled to a kiss which the damsel—be she maid, wife or widow—is in honor bound to accord him without resistance or remonstrance of any kind.

On Christmas Eve in all parts of Italy the people play upon instruments and sing before the shrines of the Blessed Virgin Mother with the poetical idea of cheering her through the pangs of maternity. In Great Britain and on the continent of Europe the church bells ring out their loudest and sweetest, while from a tradition that the Saviour came into the world on the night of December 25, the bells are rung for a high mass, the grandest, most imposing character. In Spain, Italy and France especially, the churches are magnificently decorated and after the midnight mass a collation is served to those who have spent Christmas Eve in this pious work of adornment.

One of the oldest customs of Christmas Eve, in the olden times, was the lighting of the yule-clog, which was supposed to illuminate the whole house and in every part of it to turn night into day. The yule-clogs that burned in the vast halls of the old English and Latin churches, and the great houses of the nobles, were the most prominent continued during the twelve days from December 25 to January 6. They believed that throughout that time their great Deities moved about the earth, and that, though invisible, their personal movements could be readily traced.

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CHRIST'S BIRTH.

The Story of the Nativity Told by Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage—The Advent of the Redeemer of Mankind on Earth.

How Childhood and Motherhood Were Honored; the Cradle Made to Mean More Than the Grave.

How the Child of To-Day is to Suffer in Destinies and Usher in the World's Salvation or Destruction.

"THE BARN AND ITS SURROUNDINGS." Special to the Gazette.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., Dec. 25.—Services to-day at the Brooklyn Tabernacle were jubilant. Professors Browne and All, with organ and cornet, were unusually powerful. Mrs. Florence Rice-Knox sang three solos. The thousands of people who packed the church and all the approaches, seemed to join in the great chorus:

He shall reign from pole to pole
With limitless sway;
He shall reign, when like a scroll,
Yonder heavens have passed away.

Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage, D. D., took as the subject of his sermon, "The Barn and Its Surroundings." His text was taken from Luke 1:15. The shepherds said one to another, let us now go even into Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass." Dr. Talmage said:

One thousand years of the world's existence rolled painfully and wearily along, and no Christ. Two thousand years, and no Christ. Three thousand years, and no Christ. "Give us a Christ," had cried Arabian and Persian and Chaldean and Egyptian civilizations, but the lips of the earth and the lips of the sky made no answer. The world had already been silent of genius. Among poets had appeared Homer and Theophrastus and Aristotle and Sophocles and Euripides and Alexis and Socrates, yet no Christ. Another great figure of the past centuries, among historians had appeared Herodotus and Xenophon and Thucydides, but no Christ from whom all history was to date backward and forward—B. C. and A. D. Among conquerors—C. Julius and Maullus and Regulus and Xantippus and Hannibal and Scipio and Pompey and Caesar, yet no Christ who was to be the conqueror of earth and heaven.

But the slow century and the slow year and the slow month and the slow hour at last arrived. The world had had matins or concerts in the morning and vespers or concerts in the evening, but now it was to have a concert at midnight. The black window shutters of a December night were thrown open, and some of the best singers of a world where they all sing stood there, and putting back the drapery of cloud, chanted a peace anthem, until all the echoes of hill and valley applauded and echoed the Hallelujah chorus.

At last the world has a Christ and just the Christ it needs. Come, let us go into Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, that which we have never before worshipped at the manger. Here is a Madonna most looking at. I wonder not that the most frequent name in all lands and in all Christian centuries is Mary. And there are Marys in palaces and Marys in cabins, and though German and French and Italian and Spanish and English pronounce it differently, they are all

NAMESAKES OF THE ONE whom we find on a bed of straw with her pale face against the soft cheek of Christ in the night of the Nativity. All the great painters have tried on canvas to present Mary and her child and the incidents of that most famous night of the world's history. Raphael, three different times, has painted the birth of the Saviour, and the galleries of Dresden are forgotten when I think of the small room of that gallery containing the Sistine Madonna. Yet all of them were copies of St. Matthew's Madonna, and Luke's Madonna, the inspired Madonnas of the Old Book, which we had put into our hands when we were children, and we had hoped to have under our heads when we die.

Behold, in the first place that on the first night of Christ's life God honored the bright creation. You cannot get into that Bethlehem barn without going past the camels, the mules, the dogs, the oxen. The brutes of that stable heard the first cry of the infant Lord. Some of the old painters represent the ox and the ass kneeling that night before the newborn babe. And well might they kneel. Have you ever thought that Christ came, among other things, to alleviate the sufferings of the brute creation? Was it not appropriate that he should during the first few days and nights of His life on earth be surrounded by the dumb beasts whose moans and plaint and bellowing have for ages been

A PRAYER TO GOD, for the arresting of their tortures and for the righting of their wrongs? It did not merely "happen so" that the unintelligent creatures of God should have been that night in close neighborhood. Not a keeper of a menagerie, not a bird's nest, not a worm-on-a-tree, not a cow-pen, not a freight car in summer time bringing the bees to market without water through a thousand miles of agony, not a surgeon's room witnessing the struggles of fox or rabbit or pigeon or dog in the horrors of vivisection, but as an atonement for the fact that Christ was born in a stable surrounded by brutes. He remembered, that night, and the prayer he heard in his pitiful moan, He will answer in the punishment of those who maltreat the dumb brutes. They surely have as much right in this world as we have.

In that chapter of Genesis you may see that the place was divided into four before man was the fish and fowl created the fifth day, and the quadruped the morning of the sixth day, and man not until the afternoon of that day. The whale, the eagle, the lion, and all the lesser creatures of their kind were predecessors of the human family. They have the world by right of possession. They have also paid for the place they occupied. What an army of defense all over the land are the faithful world owes to horse, and camel, and ox for transportation? And robin and lark have by the cantatas with which they have allied orchard and forest, more than paid for the few grains they have picked for their sustenance. When you abuse any creature of God you strike the Creator, and you insult the Christ who, though he might have been welcomed into life by princes, and taken his first infantile slumber amid Tyrian plush and canopied couches, and sipping waters from royal aqueducts dripping into basins of ivory and pearl, chose to be born on the level with a cow's horn, or a camel's hoof, or a dog's nose,

that he might be the alleviation of brutal suffering as well as the redemption of man.

Standing then, as I imagine now I do, in that Bethlehem night with an infant Christ on the one side and the speechless creatures of God on the other, I cry: Look out how you strike the rowl into that horned side. Take off that curbed bit from that bleeding mouth. Remove that saddle from that raw back. Shoot not for fun—that bird is too small for food. Forget not to put water into the cage of that catary. Throw out some crumbs to those birds caught too far north in the winter's inclemency. Arrest that man who is making that one horse rush in upon that straggling boy as torturing a cat or transfixing a butterfly and grasshopper. Drive not off that old robin for her nest is a mother's cradle and under her wing there may be three or four prima donnas of the sky in training. And in your families and in your schools teach the coming generation more mercy than the present generation has ever shown and in the sacred story Bible picture of the Nativity, while you point out to them the angel, show them also the camel, and while they hear the celestial chant let them also hear the cow's moan. No more did Christ show interest in the botanical world when he said, "Consider the lilies," than he showed sympathy for the zoological when he said, "Behold the fowls of the air, and the quadruped world when he allowed himself to be called in one place a lion and in another place a lamb. Meanwhile, may the Christ of the Bethlehem cattle pen have mercy on the suffering stockyards that are preparing disaster and fevered death for

OUR CHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLDS. Behold also in this Bible scene how on that Christmas night God honored childhood. Christ might have made his first visit to our world in a cloud, as he will descend on his next visit in a cloud. In what a chariot of illumined vapor he might have rolled down the sky escorted by hosts of angels with plumed crests and drawn sword, each with a carriage of fire to take him up, why not Jesus carry a cage of fire to fetch him down? Or, over the arched bridge of a rainbow the Lord might have descended. Or Christ might have had his mortality built upon earth out of the mud of the garden, as was Adam, in full manhood, the start without the introductory feebleness of infancy. No, no, no! Childhood was to be honored by his birth. He must have a child's light limbs, and a child's dimpled hand, and a child's beaming eye, and a child's flaxen hair, and babyhood was to be honored for all time to come, and a cradle was to mean a grave. Mighty God! May the refuge of the infant child's face be seen in all infantile faces. Enough have all those fathers and mothers on hand if they have a child in the house. A throne, a crown, a scepter, a kingdom under charge. Be careful how you strike him on the head, jarring the brain. What you say to him will be centered in his mind, and a hundred years and a thousand years will not stop the echo and re-echo. Do not say, "It is only a child." Rather say, "It is only an immortal." It is only a masterpiece of Jehovah. It is only a being that shall outlive sun, and moon, and star, and ages quadrilateral. God has infinite resources and he can give presents of great value. When he wants to give the richest possible gift to a household he looks around all the worlds and all the universe and then gives a child. The greatest present that God ever gave our world he gave about 1887 years ago, and he gave it on a Christmas night, and it was of such value that Heaven adjourned for a season, and came down and

BROKE THROUGH THE CEILING to look at it. Yes, in all ages God has honored childhood. He makes almost every picture a failure unless there be a child either playing on the floor, or looking through the window or seated on the lap gazing into the face of its mother. It was a child in Naaman's kitchen that told the great Syrian ruler of the world to go and get cured of the leprosy which his seventh plunge in the Jordan was left at the bottom of the river. It was to the cradle of leaves in which a child was laid rocked by the Nile that God called the attention of history. It was a sick child that evoked Christ's curative sympathies.

Behold, also, that on that Christmas night God honored motherhood. Two angels on their wings might have brought an infant Saviour to Bethlehem without Mary's being there at all. When the villagers, on the morning of December 26, awoke, by divine arrangement and in some unexplained way, the child Jesus might have been found in some comfort in the cradle of the village. But no, no! Motherhood for all time was to be consecrated, and one of the tenderest relations was to be the maternal relation, and one of the sweetest words "Mother." In all ages God

HAS HONORED GOOD MOTHERHOOD. John Wesley had a good mother, Samuel Butcher, a good mother, Doddridge, a good mother, Walter Scott, a good mother, Benjamin West, a good mother, in a great audience, most of whom were Christians, I asked that all those who had been blessed of Christian mothers arise, and amidst the entire assembly stood up. Don't you see how important it is that all motherhood be consecrated? Why did the angels, the Father, the Spirit, who heaved the Madonna, make it a maternal face? Why did Rubens, the German artist, in his Madonna make it a German face? Why did Joshua Reynolds, the English artist, in his Madonna, make it an English face? Why did Murillo, the Spanish artist, in his Madonna make it a Spanish face? I never heard, but I think that they took their own mothers as the type of Mary, the Mother of the World. You hear some one in sermon or oration speak in the abstract of a good, faithful, honest mother, your eyes fill up with tears while you say to yourself, that was my mother. The first word a child utters is apt to be, "mother," and the old man in his dying dream calls, "mother!" It matters not what mother she was brought up in the surroundings of a city, and in a silent home, and was dressed appropriately with reference to the demands of modern life, or whether she wore the old-time cap, and great round spectacles, and apron of her own make, and knit your socks with her own needles by the broad fireplace, with great back-log ablaze, on a winter night, matters not how many wrinkles crossed and recrossed her face, or how much her shoulders stooped with the burdens of a long life, if you painted a Madonna hers would be the face.

WHAT A GENTLE HAND she had when we were sick and what a voice to soothe pain and what a way that who could so fill up a room with peace and purity and light? And what a day that was when we came home and she could greet us not, for her lips were forever still. Come back, mother, this Christmas day and take your old place, and as ten or twenty or fifty years ago, come and open the old Bible you used to read and kneel in the same place where you used to pray and look upon us as of old when you wished us a Merry Christmas or a Happy New Year. But no! That would not be fair to call you back. You had troubles enough and aches enough and bereavements enough while you were here. Tarry by the throne, mother, till we join you there, your prayers, and in the eternal home of our God we shall

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for more than 2000 years ago Caspar, and Belthasar, and Melchior sent their three gifts in worship.

Behold also in that first Christmas night that God honored the fields. Come in, shepherds, to Bethlehem and see the child. "No," they say; "we are not dressed good enough to carry God." "Yes, you are, come in." Sure enough, the storms and the night dew, and the brambles have made rough work with their apparel, but none have a better right to come in. They were the first to hear the music of that Christmas night. The first announcement of a Saviour's birth was made to those men in the fields. There were wisecracks that night in Bethlehem and Jerusalem snoring in deep sleep, and there were salaried officers of government who, hearing of it afterward, may have thought that they ought to have had the first news of such a great event, some one dismounting from a wild camel at their door and knocking them at some untimely hour. "Who comes there?" the great ones of the palace might have been told of the celestial arrival. No, the shepherds heard the first two bars of the music, the first in the major key and the last in the sublimed minor: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill to men. Ah, yes, the fields were honored. The old shepherds with plaid cravats have for the most part vanished, but we have grazing on our United States pastures fields and prairies about 45,000,000 sheep—and all their keepers ought to follow the shepherds of my text, and all those who toll in fields, all wire-dressers, all orchardists, all husbandmen. Not only on Christmas night, but all up and down the world's history God has been honoring the fields. Nearly all the Messiahs of reform, and literature, and eloquence, and law, and benevolence have

Washington from the fields. Jefferson from the fields. The Presidential martyrs, Garfield and Lincoln, from the fields. Henry Clay from the fields. Daniel Webster from the fields. Martin Luther from the fields. And before this world is right the overflowing populations of our crowded cities will have to take to the fields. Instead of ten merchants in rivalry as to who shall sell that one apple, we want at least eight of them to get out and raise apples. Instead of ten merchants, desiring to sell that one bushel of wheat, we want at least eight of them to go out and raise wheat. The world wants now more hard hands, more bronzed cheeks, more muscular arms. To the fields! God honored them when he woke up the shepherds by the midnight anthem, and while the world lasts, continue to honor the fields. When the shepherd's crook was that famous night stood against the wall of the Bethlehem barn, it was a prophecy of the time when threefold's plow, and farmer's plough, and woodman's axe, and ox's yoke, and sheep blinder's rake shall surrender to the God who made the country as man made the town.

Behold also, that on that Christmas night God honored motherhood. Two angels on their wings might have brought an infant Saviour to Bethlehem without Mary's being there at all. When the villagers, on the morning of December 26, awoke, by divine arrangement and in some unexplained way, the child Jesus might have been found in some comfort in the cradle of the village. But no, no! Motherhood for all time was to be consecrated, and one of the tenderest relations was to be the maternal relation, and one of the sweetest words "Mother." In all ages God

HAS HONORED GOOD MOTHERHOOD. John Wesley had a good mother, Samuel Butcher, a good mother, Doddridge, a good mother, Walter Scott, a good mother, Benjamin West, a good mother, in a great audience, most of whom were Christians, I asked that all those who had been blessed of Christian mothers arise, and amidst the entire assembly stood up. Don't you see how important it is that all motherhood be consecrated? Why did the angels, the Father, the Spirit, who heaved the Madonna, make it a maternal face? Why did Rubens, the German artist, in his Madonna make it a German face? Why did Joshua Reynolds, the English artist, in his Madonna, make it an English face? Why did Murillo, the Spanish artist, in his Madonna make it a Spanish face? I never heard, but I think that they took their own mothers as the type of Mary, the Mother of the World. You hear some one in sermon or oration speak in the abstract of a good, faithful, honest mother, your eyes fill up with tears while you say to yourself, that was my mother. The first word a child utters is apt to be, "mother," and the old man in his dying dream calls, "mother!" It matters not what mother she was brought up in the surroundings of a city, and in a silent home, and was dressed appropriately with reference to the demands of modern life, or whether she wore the old-time cap, and great round spectacles, and apron of her own make, and knit your socks with her own needles by the broad fireplace, with great back-log ablaze, on a winter night, matters not how many wrinkles crossed and recrossed her face, or how much her shoulders stooped with the burdens of a long life, if you painted a Madonna hers would be the face.

WHAT A GENTLE HAND she had when we were sick and what a voice to soothe pain and what a way that who could so fill up a room with peace and purity and light? And what a day that was when we came home and she could greet us not, for her lips were forever still. Come back, mother, this Christmas day and take your old place, and as ten or twenty or fifty years ago, come and open the old Bible you used to read and kneel in the same place where you used to pray and look upon us as of old when you wished us a Merry Christmas or a Happy New Year. But no! That would not be fair to call you back. You had troubles enough and aches enough and bereavements enough while you were here. Tarry by the throne, mother, till we join you there, your prayers, and in the eternal home of our God we shall

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